



U.S. Department of the Interior  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area  
HCR 33, Box 5500  
Las Vegas, Nevada 89124  
(702) 363-1921



## Bridge Mountain Hike

### Know Before You Go

**Hike distance:** 5 miles round trip from the summit of Rocky Gap Road. A 4x4 vehicle is needed to get to the summit of Rocky Gap Road. If you decide to hike from the Willow Springs parking lot, the distance would be 19 miles round trip. Travel with a 4x4 vehicle between the summit and the Lovell Canyon Road is not recommended.

**Rating:** *Difficult* due to elevation (Bridge Mtn is 6,761 feet above sea level), and trail conditions. The trail is in good shape in the beginning, but much of it is unimproved.

**Precautions:** You should carry first aid supplies, extra food and clothing. There may not be any water on the trail so make sure to take plenty. A topographic map of the area is also recommended.

**Permit Required:** If you are planning on staying overnight on the Rocky Gap Road or trail to Bridge Mountain you are required to first obtain a permit by calling: 702-515-5050.

**Regulations:** Campfires and firewood collection are prohibited. To minimize conflicts with wildlife, pets should be leashed at all times and pet waste must be packed out.

### Geology

The ridge offers an excellent view of the famous *Keystone Thrust Fault Zone*, where tremendous forces associated with the movement of the Earth's crustal plates have forced the older dark grey limestones to ride up over the younger red and white sandstones (locally known as Aztec Sandstone). The limestone weathers into fairly large blocks that remain in place. The sandstone weathers differently, breaking down into sand grains that are easily washed and blown away. The contrast between the brush covered limestone and the bare sandstone beneath it clearly delineates the Keystone Thrust Fault Zone.

### The Route

The trail begins at the summit of the Rocky Gap Road (this is not marked but there is a parking area on the south side of the road). The trail winds around the head of a basin that drains to the west, eventually reaching the summit of the escarpment after a mile walk with about a 700 foot gain in elevation. The trail then turns south along the ridge line for approximately 1/4 mile. It descends around the heads of two small drainages to the east before climbing a steep side hill to the top of a narrow ridge that runs eastward into Pine Creek.

The trail becomes poorly defined as it snakes down the crest of the ridge to the east. Hikers should stay on the crest as much as possible as the going is easier there than it is on the side of the hill. Soon after the limestone rock disappears and exposes the sandstone, the route drops off the ridge to the north into a small basin and empties into Pine Creek 1,500 feet below.

From the head of Pine Creek the route winds off through a slick rock bench studded with numerous small catch basins that hold water after rain. Some of these basins are quite large, the biggest on this hike is located in the extreme southwest corner of Sec. 8 T 21 S, R 58 E. Water trapped in these tanks or *tinajas*, supports a diverse and fragile community of plants and animals. Camping is not permitted within 1/4 mile of water sources as the presence of humans may scare wildlife away.

After the big tank the trail becomes a route across the slick rock bench. The correct route is marked intermittently with small patches of orange paint in the shape of bighorn sheep tracks. If the correct route is not followed correctly, hikers may find themselves perched on the edge of a sheer drop with no way down. In many areas the route is broken by short vertical pitches that must be carefully negotiated. It is approximately 1/2 mile from the big tank to the bottom of the saddle which leads up to Bridge Mountain with a drop of 350 feet.

Near the summit of Bridge Mountain the route leads straight up a system of joints and ledges for a distance of 400 feet. The patch is not as sheer as it appears during the approach, and there are plenty of holds for hands and feet. However, the climb is relatively exposed and extreme care should be exercised in the climb. A missed step could plunge a hiker hundreds of feet into Pine Creek. Climbing with the joints offers more security, but climbing up the face along the side is slightly easier.

Once the summit has been reached and explored, another route leads up onto the bench above from inside the alcove near a pine tree. Just north of Bridge Mountain a hundred yards or so, is a large, deep and almost circular tank nearly 80 feet across and 60 feet deep. Over the bench to the east is a large alcove that shelters a grove of Ponderosa Pine trees, which grow very slowly in this area because of the dry conditions.

The return to the summit on the Rocky Gap Road is a matter of retracing the same path back. There are no alternative routes or short cuts. Do not attempt to climb straight down from the escarpment without technical climbing gear.

